

REMARKS

This is intended as a full and complete response to the Final Office Action dated February 17, 2004, having a shortened statutory period for response set to expire on May 17, 2004. Claims 4 and 17-36 have been examined. The Examiner has indicated that claims 4, 17-19, 23, 28, 29, and 35 are allowed. The Examiner rejected claims 22, 24, 25, 30, and 32 as being anticipated by *Geske*. The Examiner rejected claims 20 and 21 as being unpatentable over *Geske*. The Examiner rejected claims 26 and 27 as being unpatentable over *Geske* in view of *Bixenman*. The Examiner rejected claims 31, 34, and 36 as being unpatentable over *Geske* in view of *Lembcke, et al.* and *Bixenman*. Additionally, the Examiner objected to claim 33 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102 (b)

The Examiner rejected claims 22, 24, 25, 30, and 32 as being anticipated by *Geske* (U.S. 4,096,911). In response, claim 30 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 33. The Examiner stated that claim 33 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Therefore, claim 30 as amended is patentable over *Geske* and in condition for allowance. Previously presented claims 24, 25 and 32 depend from allowable amended claim 30 and are allowable for at least the same reasons as amended claim 30. Further, previously presented claim 22 depends from allowed claim 17. Applicants therefore respectfully request withdrawal of the § 102(b) rejection of claims 22, 24, 25, 30, and 32 and allowance of those claims.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103 (a)

The Examiner rejected claims 20 and 21 as being obvious in view of *Geske*. Applicants respectfully traverse. Claims 20 and 21 depend from allowable amended claim 30. As set forth above, *Geske* fails to teach or suggest all the limitations in amended claim 30. For this reason, *Geske* cannot be used to render claims 20 and 21 obvious. Applicants therefore submit that claims 20 and 21 are in condition for allowance and respectfully request withdrawal of the § 103(a) rejection.

The Examiner rejected claims 26 and 27 as being obvious over *Geske* in view of *Bixenman* (U.S. 6,343,651). Applicants respectfully traverse. Claims 26 and 27 depend from allowable amended claim 30. As set forth above, *Geske* fails to teach or suggest all the limitations in amended claim 30. Likewise, neither does *Bixenman*. For this reason, neither *Geske* and/or *Bixenman* can be used to render claims 26 and 27 obvious. Applicants therefore submit that claims 26 and 27 are in condition for allowance and respectfully request withdrawal of the § 103(a) rejection.

The Examiner rejected claims 31 and 34 as being obvious over *Geske* in view of *Lembcke, et al.* (U.S. 6,173,788) and *Bixenman*. Applicants respectfully traverse. Claims 31 and 34 depend from allowable amended claim 30. As set forth above, *Geske* fails to teach or suggest all the limitations in amended claim 30. Likewise, neither does *Lembcke, et al.* or *Bixenman*. For this reason, neither *Geske* and/or *Lembcke, et al.* and/or *Bixenman* can be used to render claims 31 and 34 obvious. Applicants therefore submit that claims 31 and 34 are in condition for allowance and respectfully request withdrawal of the § 103(a) rejection.

The Examiner rejected claim 36 as being obvious over *Geske* in view of *Lembcke, et al.* and *Bixenman*. In response, claim 36 has been amended to include the limitations of claim 33. The Examiner stated that claim 33 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Therefore, claim 36 as amended is patentable over *Geske* in view of *Lembcke, et al.* and *Bixenman* and in condition for allowance.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner has indicated that claims 4, 17-19, 23, 28, 29, and 35 are allowed. Applicants appreciate allowance of claims 4, 17-19, 23, 28, 29, and 35.

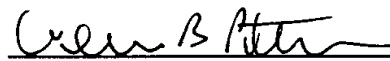
The Examiner has objected to claim 33 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. As set forth above, both claims 30 and 36 have been amended to include the limitations of claim 33. Therefore, as previously stated, Applicants believe claims 30 and 36 are in condition of allowance.

CONCLUSION

The references cited by the Examiner, alone or in combination, do not teach, show, or suggest the invention as claimed.

Having addressed all issues set out in the Final Office Action, Applicants respectfully submit that the claims are in condition for allowance and respectfully request that the claims be allowed.

Respectfully submitted,



William B. Patterson
Registration No. 34,102
MOSER, PATTERSON & SHERIDAN, L.L.P.
3040 Post Oak Blvd. Suite 1500
Houston, TX 77056
Telephone: (713) 623-4844
Facsimile: (713) 623-4846
Attorney for Applicants